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## WITCHES AND CUNNING FOLK IN BRITISH LITERATURE 1800-1940

During the past few decades, beliefs and attitudes concerning witchcraft and magic in modern Britain have become a major focus of scholarship; but that scholarship has concentrated primarily on opposed ends of the period. The early modern prosecutions of alleged witchcraft and magic have been extensively treated, as have representations of those phenomena in literature of all kinds. Likewise, their representation in different media since the mid-twentieth century, especially on screen, has been another popular subject, and self-styled witches and ritual magicians have received increasing attention in recent decades. By contrast, the intervening centuries, from 1740 to 1940 have been relatively neglected by both social and literary historians. The former have only recently commenced systematic research into attitudes to magic at the popular level,<sup>1</sup> while the latter are as yet represented by a few useful exploratory works, often unpublished, and they have not as yet constructed any consensual picture of their subject.

Of the main such authors, Maureen Moran has noted the obsessive engagement of the Victorians with the witch as a metaphor and historical phenomenon, and suggested that it was used mainly to confirm traditional social and gender roles; while Per Faxneld has riposted that between 1800 and 1930 witches were also used effectively as symbols of female liberation.<sup>2</sup> Susan Elsley has argued that positive images of witches increased in British culture as the nineteenth century progressed, and Sarah Bruton, conversely, that witches lost their power in late-nineteenth-century representations, though when written by women throughout the modern period they always initiate some subversion.<sup>3</sup> Interaction between these works has been made more difficult by the fact that they not only cover different spans of time and geography but make different definitions of a witch. In its narrower usage, the term is restricted to the sort of people who were accused in the early modern trials or suspected of witchcraft in Victorian local communities. At its broadest, it is extended to include classical demi-goddesses like Circe, part-human ancient monsters such as lamiae, the

enchantresses of medieval romance, and even fictional characters who might be thought to have some witch-like characteristics like Charles Dickens's Miss Havesham. In addition to these recent analyses, there is a longer tradition of scholarship dealing with the place of witchcraft and magic in the works of particular prominent authors, such as Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Hardy, but it has rarely if ever reflected upon these more general issues.<sup>4</sup>

The present essay takes a long time-frame, between 1800 and 1940, and deals specifically with the treatment in British fiction (novels, poems and short stories) of two types of character. One is the witch, as defined in the early modern trials and demonologies, and in popular reputation then and since, as a person believed to work magic for destructive ends. The other is the magician who offers usually beneficial services for payment, to ordinary people, often known in the past, and most often recently to English-speaking historians, as a cunning woman or man. Witches will be examined in the three main roles in which they have been represented: as evil-doers, victims and heroes (or heroines). Such an enterprise leaves no room, within an essay format, for broader considerations such as the placement of this material in the context of literary output as a whole or an analysis of the motivations of writers in using it in terms of specifically literary aims, or of wider cultural movements. Nor can there be any sustained comparison of it with the portrayals of witches and popular magicians in purely historical works produced during the same period; or discussion of the influence of older literary sources such as Graeco-Roman texts and Shakespeare. To include these missing aspects would require a book. Instead, what is attempted is a systematic and comparative description and discussion of the different portrayals of witchcraft and cunning craft found in fiction in the years concerned. By this means a better sense can perhaps concisely be achieved of ways in which the world of popular magical belief was viewed by British authors of creative literature during this 'middle' period of modernity.

## THE EVIL WITCH

Of the three roles for a witch depicted in the literature concerned, the oldest and most traditional is that of a deliberate worker of bad magic, often in league with the Devil or demons. Such a role may be divided in two different ways, according to whether the storyline is comic or ostensibly serious, and to whether overtly supernatural elements are present or not. The comic mode, with a clear demonic presence, was rip-roaringly present at the opening of the period, in the form of Robert Burns's 'Tam O'Shanter', written in 1790, a high-spirited depiction of a man's flight from a witches' sabbat across which he had stumbled on Hallowe'en, attended by Satan.<sup>5</sup> A more chilling treatment, from the 1790s, was a ballad by Robert Southey, which reworked the medieval fable of the Witch of Berkeley into an early modern frame, to portray its subject as a villainess, who murdered and ate babies, enslaved demons and rifled human bones from graves.<sup>6</sup> Near the end of the decade Matthew Lewis's spectacular melodrama *The Monk* had an eponymous villain who gave his soul to the Devil at the behest of a beautiful witch (actually herself a demoness in disguise) and ended up (horrifically) claimed by Satan in person.<sup>7</sup> The influence of the relatively new genre of Gothic writing is evident upon all three (and exemplified by the third), but that linked in with much more traditional fears.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the period under review, literary representations of witches would also be underpinned by popular tales, recorded by folklore collectors in most parts of Britain, which portrayed such people as utterly wicked, possessed of all too effective magical powers, and ending up brutally punished by death or injury.<sup>9</sup>

These were reinforced in the course of the nineteenth century by the growing popularity of literary fairy tales, propelled by the work of the Brothers Grimm. The Grimms' collection, of course, itself contained such specimens as 'Hansel and Gretel', with a child-eating witch who ends up burned in her own oven; 'Little Snow White', with a queen who is at once magician, murderess, cannibal and temptress, and (in the original version) dies from being made to dance in red-hot iron shoes; and 'The Six Swans', featuring a wife who turns her stepchildren into swans and is eventually burned at

the stake.<sup>10</sup> More elevated German literature also made an impact in Britain, notably Johann von Goethe's *Faust*, first published in 1808, with its vivid part-satirical picture of a witches' sabbat. A lesser-known German author who proved especially popular among British readers was Wilhelm Meinhold, two of whose novels appeared in English in the 1840s as *The Amber Witch* and *Sidonia the Sorceress*, after serialisation in periodicals.<sup>11</sup> Both were set in seventeenth-century Pomerania. The first spanned the genres of representing the witch as villainess and as victim, because its heroine was a pure and kind maiden, tortured into a confession of witchcraft and saved from the stake at the last moment; but her conviction was abetted by a 'genuine' witch of extreme wickedness. The second had a villainess as its main character, who sought power and wealth by use of magic, and inflicted death and sterility on people in the process: in the end she and her accomplices were executed by burning. By such channels Continental images of sabbats, torture and burning at the stake – all mostly missing from actual English and Welsh witch trials – were maintained as familiar among British audiences.

In view of this context it is hardly surprising that home-grown portraits of evil witches continued to appear in British literature throughout the nineteenth century. The early 1820s produced a novel by Quintin Poynt set in Stuart Northamptonshire, in which a wicked parson interested in ritual magic formed an alliance with a local witch (a 'frightful hag') to worship Satan and obtain demonic helpers in order to make a beautiful woman submit to his lust. The witch ends up at the stake, the cleric committing suicide.<sup>12</sup> In the same decade James Hogg, 'the Ettrick Shepherd' weighed in with two successive short stories set in early modern Scotland, among his own Border hills. One concerned a coven of Satan-worshipping witches, with the actual power to turn themselves into hares, who ended up burned or banished after angels thwarted their attempts to recruit a virtuous young man. The other told of how a witch deliberately deceived an abbot, who consulted her to further his ambitions, in order to send his soul to Hell.<sup>13</sup> Alongside such full-length treatments, the public was kept aware of evil witchcraft by casual references: one such prominent example, from the

same decade, was Benjamin Disraeli's comparison, in *Vivien Gray* (1826) of clouds running before the wind, to 'a band of witches too late for their Sabbath meeting or some other mischief'.<sup>14</sup> It was the 1840s, however, which produced the most successful of all novels from the century devoted to this genre, Harrison Ainsworth's *The Lancashire Witches*, written at the height of his fame and power and never subsequently out of print. It was inspired directly by the republication, edited by a friend, of the Jacobean pamphlet defending the major Lancaster witch trial of 1612, but although Ainsworth borrowed the setting and characters from that, and the idea of attendant demons for individual witches, he invested them with Continental trappings. His Pendle Hill practitioners of witchcraft fly to sabbats and end up burned, as Christianity ultimately triumphs over the forces of evil in a classic late Gothic fantasy.<sup>15</sup>

Nothing much changed over the middle of the century. In 1855 the celebrated Elizabeth Gaskell told readers of a magazine the cautionary tale of an eighteenth-century woman doomed to spend her life expiating the sin of cursing somebody in the name of the heavenly powers; her problem was that it was the Devil who answered the curse and sent an evil spirit to effect it, thus turning her into a witch.<sup>16</sup> Between 1863 and 1870 English magazines published two poems depicting the flight of witches to the sabbat to work evil with Satan, and another in which the speaker at once exulted in the power of magic and rued her own damnation for wrecking ships with it (while also hinting that she might be mad).<sup>17</sup> The rest of the century continued in the same tradition. Some contributions came from famous pens, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'poem Sister Helen', about a medieval woman slowly destroying the man who has spurned her for another, using a wax image, while Rossetti's friend William Bell Scott produced a rollicking ballad about four witches come to an English market town to torment its inhabitants.<sup>18</sup> The most famous prose counterpart is Robert Louis Stevenson's short horror story, 'Thrawn Janet', the product of reading into accounts of actual Scottish witch trials, about an early modern Scotswoman who, on being forced formally to renounce her allegiance to the Devil, suffers a stroke and is disabled. She still, however, keeps up a

relationship with Satan, and after she hangs herself her corpse is reanimated, only to have it burned up by lightning when a minister exorcises it.<sup>19</sup> In *Catriona*, Stevenson told the story of a man at North Berwick who can curse people with illness and take the shape of a gannet, and is killed with a silver bullet.<sup>20</sup>

Where the distinguished led, the lesser cheerfully kept company. A short story in the *Powder Magazine* in 1875 told the dreadful tale of a medieval noblewoman seduced by witches into joining the sabbat in order to save her dying husband, and destroyed by them with her whole family when she returned to Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Two years later another periodical carried one set in Ulster and embodying the traditional Irish folk belief that witches stole milk and butter by magical means, but could be thwarted and forced to repent by a charm involving a hot iron.<sup>22</sup> The fin de siècle continued in the same manner: in 1894 Ford Madox Ford gave readers a woman living in a cottage with a demonic familiar in feline shape, who flew on a broom and devoured passing strangers.<sup>23</sup> All that had changed in these later depictions was that the witches concerned were less likely to get tried and burned, and even at times got away with their crimes. The new century initially made little difference to the wicked witch: to the poet Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, 'The Witches' Wood' had still to be an evil place, while a play which ran for a brief period at the Court Theatre in 1911 had a young wife use magic to kill her middle-aged husband to gain the hand of his handsome son, only to end up at the stake.<sup>24</sup>

None the less, two different new cultural developments began to make an impact on the genre from the mid-1910s onward. One was the revival of interest in learned ritual magic which occurred in the Western world during the late nineteenth century, producing closed initiatory societies of people interested in working elaborate magical rites involving special tools, robes and liturgies. A member of one of these in Britain, J. W. Brodie-Innes, published two novels in the 1910s, set in his native Scotland, which combined records of actual witch trials with the format and apparatus of the rites worked by these societies. He still, however, made the secret society of witches a wicked and

perverted one, dedicated to harming and dominating fellow humans and serving the Devil, a very real being who is opposed (and in the stories defeated) by Christian heavenly powers.<sup>25</sup> The second development was the notion that the people prosecuted for witchcraft in the early modern trials had been practitioners of surviving pagan religion, which could be disgusting or wholesome according to the attitudes of the author. This had appeared in the nineteenth century, and Brodie-Innes was himself an exponent of a version of it, but it achieved much greater popularity subsequently because of the work of Margaret Murray.<sup>26</sup> In 1927 it was taken up by a much more famous Scottish writer than Brodie-Innes, John Buchan, and made a theme of a genuine best-seller, *Witch Wood*.<sup>27</sup> Set in southern Scotland in the 1640s, it featured what would at first sight be a contextual apparatus suited to a very different view of witchcraft: of a dominant, intolerant, gloomy and repressive established Presbyterian Church, which encourages witch-hunters who brutalize crazed old women into confession. Both the Church and the witch-hunters, however, turn out to be manipulated by a depraved pagan witch religion, surviving in secret underneath both, the local high priest of which is eventually destroyed by a Christian hero, with nobler beliefs than his Church, employing what seem to be arcane powers.<sup>28</sup>

Even the popularity of *Witch Wood*, however, was eclipsed by that attained by another novel, first published in 1934: *The Devil Rides Out* by a newly-appeared thriller-writer, Dennis Wheatley.<sup>29</sup> This blended the ritual apparatus and initiatory grades of the societies which practised the recently revived ceremonial magic, with the early modern concept of devil-worshipping witches gathering at sabbats, to produce a confident portrait of Satanism being practised in contemporary Britain, and Continental Europe. Moreover, it situated this malevolent cult within a cosmology in which the universe is a battleground between very real superhuman powers of good and evil. The former are represented by Eastern as well as Western religious systems, but the book emphasises that Christianity is the most potent and effective embodiment of them in the West. It blatantly justifies the early modern witch trials as an earlier manifestation of this struggle, the execution of witches



being for the protection of decent society, and, in a prefatory ‘Author’s Note’, warns readers that ‘Black Magic’ is still actually practised in the modern world, and carries ‘dangers of a very real and concrete nature’. From the beginning, Wheatley’s view of witchcraft was linked to a right-wing political agenda: in this book he propagated the idea that Germany was entirely innocent of responsibility for World War One, which had been fomented by Russia, manipulated in turn by followers of the dark powers. It launched a series of very successful novels by him of the same kind, which were to extend into the later twentieth century and beget a genre of imitators, the heroes and heroines of which detected and defeated satanic witch cults existing secretly within modern Western society.<sup>30</sup>

In this manner the figure of the evil witch was given a new role to play in late modernity, which it maintains to the present day. Even without Wheatley’s contribution, however, it would probably have continued to thrive, because the fears which it embodies – of harm inflicted by wicked people wielding arcane powers, and of the existence of hidden enemies within social groups – have been shared by cultures across the world, and recorded in Europe since ancient times.<sup>31</sup> As well as in the books just discussed, the defeat of bad witches of the traditional kind was celebrated in literary fiction produced in the years around 1930 by at least three other authors.<sup>32</sup> It seems, therefore, as though this trope, while changing slightly in detail and inflexion at times, was a persistent literary feature of the entire period under review.

## THE WITCH AS VICTIM

Concurrent with the image of the malevolent witch ran a very different one, in which people accused of witchcraft were regarded as the innocent victims of bigotry, prejudice and superstition, and at worst, subjected to appalling atrocities of torture and judicial murder. Their suffering was portrayed as one aspect of an older, more ignorant and more brutal world, which modernity had mercifully

ended. Significantly, this image has no parallel in the records of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British folklore, but it was presaged in the early modern period in the work of authors such as John Gaule and Friedrich Spee, who attacked contemporary witch hunts for their excessive zeal and brutality, which they believed led to the conviction of guiltless people.<sup>33</sup> It became a major trope as part of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, when authors such as Voltaire used it as one of the worst examples of the misdeeds of unenlightened former regimes.<sup>34</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the most famous exponent of it in British fiction was Sir Walter Scott, who repeatedly referred in his novels to what in *The Heart of Midlothian* he called the ‘imaginary crimes’ of witches, as a blot on the reputation of seventeenth-century Scotland.<sup>35</sup> In *Ivanhoe*, he provided a medieval illustration of the same argument, in which a beautiful and innocent Jewess, Rebecca, is accused of bewitching an evil nobleman whose importunities she has rejected. She is rescued by the timely intervention of the hero, aided either by luck or divine providence, according to the taste of the reader.<sup>36</sup>

Contemporaries of Scott echoed this approach. His fellow Scot, John Galt, published a story which sent up the common folk belief that witches could transform into hares, by having seventeenth-century hunters pursue such an animal convinced that it is a witch, only to discover that it really is a hare.<sup>37</sup> The Englishman Thomas Gaspey produced a long novel set in Hertfordshire in 1659-60 and featuring the most notorious English witch-hunter, Matthew Hopkins, who is called in to entrap a local woman whom credulous locals have persuaded themselves to suspect of witchcraft. Though she is actually a genteel, reasonable and generous lady, he would have secured her conviction had not one of the tale’s heroes defeated, humiliated and expelled him.<sup>38</sup> In 1831 Scott accompanied his sequence of novels, and these other works, with a historical account of the witch trials, designed to drive home his view of them as one of the ‘grosser faults of our ancestors’ and to prove that even a devout Christian need not believe in witchcraft.<sup>39</sup> He was followed over the rest of the century by a series of historical works by British authors - books and magazine articles - of the same kind, rejecting a belief in magic as outmoded superstition and deploring the witch hunts.<sup>40</sup> Where non-

fiction led, fiction kept up. The same magazines which published articles condemning the historic trials also carried short stories set in early modern Europe, including England, which showed how innocent and virtuous individuals could be first suspected as witches and then condemned as them, sometimes having happy endings as the victims were rescued at the last moment, as Scott's Rebecca had been, and sometimes not.<sup>41</sup> The folklore record suggests, as said, that such kindly attitudes to suspected witches were not much shared among the rural working classes of the period, but the journal one is equally good evidence that they resonated well with the middle-class subscribers to these magazines.

The same approach was taken by more substantial fictional works in the rest of the century and beyond, some of which were also more enduring. Elizabeth Gaskell's story from 1859, *Lois the Witch*, told the tale of an imagined victim of the notorious Salem witch-hunt which took place in New England in the 1690s, and in doing so portrayed more carefully and delicately that before the mental processes whereby a wholly guiltless and good person could be turned into the witch in the eyes of a community. It is a study of tragic martyrdom.<sup>42</sup> Two years later, Elizabeth Linton published an anthology of stories about witches found in early modern sources, claiming them to be 'landmarks of the excesses to which blind belief may hurry and impel humanity'.<sup>43</sup> The theme of the rescue of the innocent maiden sentenced to burn as a witch lasted into the Edwardian period, notably in a short story by Mrs Baillie Reynolds, set in seventeenth-century New England.<sup>44</sup> On the whole, however, the literature generated by the early modern trials themselves testified more eloquently to the way in which difficult and cantankerous people could attract suspicions of witchcraft, rather than the pure, beautiful and kindly, and this was also absorbed into novels. When in 1909 Ford Madox Ford published one set initially in Jacobean Rye, he took it for granted that a proud, insolent and quarrelsome female character would be accused by her enemies of enacting satanic rites and making love philtres.<sup>45</sup>

By then a new subset of the genre had developed, propelled by the realisation – embodied in the many studies of local folklore which were now being produced – that the fear of witchcraft was not a feature of the past, but remained strong among the working classes – and especially those of the countryside – in most areas of Britain. This was taken into canonical literature in 1878 by Thomas Hardy, who brought to it the narrative skill and psychological depth which Mrs Gaskell had accorded to her tragic seventeenth-century heroine. He did so first in *The Return of the Native*, by portraying the murderous hatred engendered in a Dorset countrywoman by the growing conviction that another woman had blighted her child with sickness. Hardy carefully described the counter-curse she had enacted in retaliation, as ‘a ghastly invention of superstition’.<sup>46</sup> He returned to the theme with even greater intensity and at greater length in his short story ‘The Withered Arm’, which explored the way in which a nineteenth-century Englishwoman could come to believe herself bewitched, and in which first her marriage and then her life could be destroyed by that belief.<sup>47</sup> Hardy had sufficient of a Gothic taste as a writer to leave open a slight possibility of a supernatural factor in the events which he narrates; but his conviction of the destructive effects of the fear of bewitchment was clear and constant. In the years between 1890 and 1930 he was followed by a set of other novelists specializing in stories of British rural life: Walter Raymond, Edward Tylee, Anne Puddicombe (writing as Allen Raine) and Mary Webb.<sup>48</sup> Most adopted Hardy’s tactic of setting their narratives in a slightly earlier period than the time at which they were writing – by one to three generations- to distance the present slightly from the full grossness of the beliefs which they were portraying and condemning. All showed the corrosive, ridiculous and unnecessary nature of the beliefs concerned, and the suffering which they inflicted. The male authors concentrated on investigating the manner in which a mixture of local tradition, accident and personality could make rural men come to be suspected, or to suspect others, of witchcraft. Their female counterparts, understandably, were more inclined to portray the victimization of brave and resourceful young women, set apart from their communities by a physical deformity or a wild and independent character, as witches by the bulk of

local people. In this manner the trope of the virtuous maiden victim of a medieval or early modern witch hunt, represented by earlier writers, was updated to a recent past: in effect, modernized. The genre had been refreshed, and so, like that of the evil witch, remained vigorous throughout our period.

## THE WITCH AS HEROINE

To present a witch as a heroine seems to have been virtually impossible for early modern authors, as long as witchcraft was defined as it is here, as the use of harmful magic. Either a person was a witch, in which case she or he was to be condemned, or was an innocent victim of a false charge, in which case she or he was to be pitied. In the modern folklore collections, it is true, a slightly different attitude sometimes prevailed. If they are barren of tales about falsely accused witches, they occasionally provide a story of a poor and old woman who is badly treated by a more powerful and wealthy male, and gains her revenge by bewitching him, to devastating effect. Inter-class tensions, and a desire for social justice, could at times temper the popular loathing and fear of the witch figure.<sup>49</sup> There is no precise equivalent to this motif in literature during the period reviewed here: the nearest, a little earlier, would be William Wordsworth's Goody Blake, but this character, a poor old countrywoman, asks the Christian God to strike the man who had ill-treated her, and so afflicts him with the shivers for life (either by a divine or a psychosomatic mechanism).<sup>50</sup> There were, however, other ways in which the traditional image of the witch could occasionally be subverted or redeemed. One of the simplest was to use it for beautiful and alluring women whose power to ensnare male hearts and senses could metaphorically be described as bewitchment.<sup>51</sup> Very occasionally, well-known witch stories could be rewritten to give them happy endings, the most prominent (and absurd) example of this probably being R. T. Gunton's light opera about the Lancashire witches, staged in 1879. In this Harrison Ainsworth's famous story is turned around, as King James ends up pardoning

all the witches, and the prettiest of them marries the heir to a local gentry family.<sup>52</sup> Alternatively, outwardly evil folkloric witches could sometimes prove to have hearts of gold, such as in a short story of 1868, in which a ‘forest-witch’ living alone in a remote hut formed of snakes, owls, bats and toads, tells a wife how to rescue her husband from an enchantment.<sup>53</sup> It was also possible for a feisty young female character in a story to manipulate a reputation for witchcraft to control or repel men. The most famous such occasion is probably in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, where the young Catherine Linton cows an obnoxious male servant by playing on his fear that she might be a witch.<sup>54</sup>

That mechanism held open a door for a genuinely new use for the image of the witch as a vehicle or metaphor for female liberation or self-assertion, which appeared at the end of the nineteenth century. The first clear example of it seems to be in 1895, in a short story by Mary Chavelita Dunne, writing as George Egerton. This recounts the love affair of an unhappily married woman with a fisherman, in which the heroine couples ‘woman’s witchcraft and woman’s strength’ together as the expression of a fundamental female need for independence and agency, and freedom from convention. She calls the latter ‘witchery’, and her husband terms her a ‘devil’, while her lover labels her a ‘witch’.<sup>55</sup> In 1908 Oliver Madox Hueffer, brother of the novelist Ford Madox Ford, published a history of witchcraft in which he sounded the familiar theme of its identity as an aspect of ignorance and superstition, but conceded that a reputation for it might have given lonely and crazed old women a sense of self-worth, and so it could make a good symbol of the female fight for freedom. The full flowering of this role for it in fiction, however, came in the 1920s, as writers adjusted to the new place of women in politics and society following their legal entry into parliamentary politics. The undoubted star among the novels which resulted was Sylvia Townsend Warner’s *Lolly Willows*, which appeared in 1926 and has become a feminist classic. It portrayed the journey of a middle-aged spinster into satanic witchcraft as a vital step on a journey of personal liberation, independence and self-fulfilment, though the sabbat which she joins is a very polite and restrained, provincial English, version of the early modern stereotype; and her Satan is an

understated and genteel figure. These traits are at one with the gentle and ironic humour of the story.<sup>56</sup>

Warner's work was, however, just the best example of a flurry of writing which embodied the concept of witchcraft as a liberating or healthily disruptive force in modern England. It was gloriously presaged in 1919, by Stella Benson's *Living Alone*, set in the First World War and making magic the antithesis to the restrictive effects of law, convention, class consciousness and lack of imagination. Its heroine is a female witch, in a world in which magic seems to be born spontaneously into certain people, who uses her powers chiefly 'as an ingredient for happiness, sometimes to remind people, and sometimes to make them forget'.<sup>57</sup> As such, she functions as an anarchic force in the lives of a set of hidebound middle-class Londoners, shaking them out of complacency and normality and permanently liberating the most downtrodden woman among them, who emigrates to America. The tone of comic whimsy is more frenetic, and just as surreal, as that which Warner was to employ. Warner's book was itself followed within a year by two products of male writers, which treated the same theme in different ways. Eric Maschwitz, writing as Holt Marvell, echoed the tone of deft and fey comedy established by Benson and Warner with a story about a witch, living alone in a cottage in Hampshire, flying on a broomstick, laying curses, shifting her shape and reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards, whose services are hired by the local great lady. The latter engages her to ensure that the lady's house guests at her mansion are unable to leave it for an entire year: the spell works, and the comedy lies in the disruption of relationships which occurs as a result.<sup>58</sup> More sombre was Anthony Richardson's *The Barbury Witch*, set on the North Wilshire chalk hills and concerning a beautiful, upper-class and eccentric woman who lives with her three children in an isolated cottage. The locals automatically call her a witch, though she does not regard herself as one, and are rather proud of her as such: the label had become a natural one for an independent and redoubtable woman.<sup>59</sup> That role for it was to persist through the century to become an enduring feature of mass culture and a motif of second-wave feminism.

It may therefore be suggested that the trope of the witch as bringer of liberty and agent of social and cultural subversion, especially for women, was a distinctively late modern one, appearing at the end of the nineteenth century and coming into its own in the twentieth. It was certainly rooted in older attitudes, both popular and literary, which stretched back into at least the first half of the nineteenth century. None the less, unlike the images of the witch as social and religious enemy, and the witch as social victim, it has no apparent correspondence with attitudes from the time of the witch trials themselves.

## CUNNING FOLK

Early modern British sources for witchcraft and magic are rich in evidence for a very different sort of magical practitioner from those suspected of inflicting harm: people who offered their services to assist clients with a range of problems, usually illnesses in themselves, their families or their livestock, physical blemishes or wounds, lost or stolen goods, or the suspicion of suffering from bewitchment. As such, they were regarded by most of the early modern British population as the antithesis of the evil witch, and indeed rarely called witches by it at all, being usually known as ‘cunning’ or ‘wise’ folk, or by a range of local names. They were commonly involved in cases of witchcraft, as the experts who detected and identified the persons allegedly responsible for the bewitchment. Ever since the introduction of Christianity, however, the official attitude of the dominant Church had been to condemn all use of magic, defined as any operations which sought to manipulate supernatural or preternatural power outside of its own formal structures and processes. The work of cunning folk was therefore stigmatised as consciously or unconsciously demonic, and the Reformation only reinforced this animosity, so that most members of the educated elite of early modern Britain condemned such popular magicians as frauds, dupes, or agents of the Devil, and described them as witches, though often with the prefix of ‘white’ or ‘good’. This dichotomy



persisted into the nineteenth century, with many ordinary people still seeking, and paying for, the spells of cunning folk and most members of the higher social orders condemning them as exemplars and purveyors of outmoded superstition.<sup>60</sup>

That condemnation sharpened in the first three decades of the century, as a movement for social reform and renewal, often coupled with a reenergized Christian evangelism, became an aspect of British life: it manifested in a new law in 1824 which criminalised the work of cunning folk with a new precision and severity. It was reflected in literature, most prominently in the novels of Sir Walter Scott, who returned repeatedly to the figure of the folk magician in different ways. He was most savage in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, for which he created the character of Ailsie Gourlay, an elderly Scotswoman from the period around 1700 with a considerable local reputation as a cunning woman who provided the full range of services associated with the role. Scott made plain that her true cunning lay in deception and manipulation, and that she had a side-line in genuinely criminal activities such as the supply of poisons. He recorded with satisfaction that she was eventually burned as a witch, like many of her kind; and so in this manner actually came close to justifying some of the witch trials which he generally condemned as atrocities born of ignorance.<sup>61</sup> He was almost as savage in a different way when writing *The Pirate*, which prominently featured an eighteenth-century Shetland seeress called Norna, of apparently awe-inspiring occult powers. He revealed the tricks by which she deluded her public into a belief in them, and delivered her to a fate of horrific irony, in which she proved to have been utterly blind to the reality of events and her manipulations led to tragedy. She was left broken, to find refuge in Christian piety.<sup>62</sup> *The Black Dwarf* does portray an apparently admirable cunning person from the same century, Canny Elshie, but he is actually an impoverished nobleman, who uses science and knowledge of human nature to achieve results which his humble clients attribute to magic.<sup>63</sup> Scott even favoured a single proletarian magician, Meg Merrilies, the aged gypsy heroine of *Guy Mannering*, who is called a witch by some and whose services are sought by others. Her magic is however very limited, to blessing a ship before a voyage,

singing a dying person out of the world, predicting the life of a child, and cursing – or delivering a menacing prophecy to – a landowner who has inflicted grave injustice on her people. She does not attempt to exploit or deceive anybody, and despite her virtues of character she still suffers a violent if heroic death, whereas the genteel Elshie is allowed a happy ending.<sup>64</sup>

Scott also completed and published *Queenhoo Hall*, by his friend Joseph Strutt, set in fifteenth-century Hertfordshire and including a disinherited gentlewoman who makes ends meet by offering divinatory services to gullible locals, especially young women.<sup>65</sup> A similar figure features in a short story from 1835, as an old and mysterious woman likewise living alone in a hut and pretending to tell fortunes. She is suspected of witchcraft by some in the district, but proves to be a protectress to the heroine.<sup>66</sup> Even at this early period, therefore, when no creative writer seems to have attempted to extenuate folk magic itself, some extenuation could be offered to some who appeared to practise it. In 1848 Mrs Gaskell offered another, in her famous novel, *Mary Barton*, introducing Alice Wilson as a poor old Manchester woman who treats the sick with herbs and field simples gathered outside the city. Herbalism, one of the traditional aspects of cunning craft, could be regarded here (legitimately) as a branch of medicine.

This was the literary tradition which prevailed at the time at which fiction-writing began to reckon with two of the great cultural forces of the second half of the century: the impact of the folklore-collecting movement, and that of the idealization of the English countryside, and appetite for accounts of rural life, which represented one reaction to the increasing processes of industrialization and urbanization which had beset large parts of the realm. Cunning folk, who were still common features of the Victorian countryside (and many towns) were accordingly prominent figures in the folklore collections, and took a proportionate place in novels about country people. On the whole, the mixture of treatments shown by earlier nineteenth-century authors continued, with the venerable traditional of learned hostility retaining considerable power. The eponymous *Wizard of West Penwith*, in William Bentinck Forfar's story of 1871, is a criminal on the run, who has settled in

West Cornwall and hit upon cunning craft, operated by trickery, as a means of making a living and winning respect there. He is a villain pure and simple, and eventually burns to death in an accidental, but highly symbolic, fire.<sup>67</sup> Thomas Hardy, subsequently raising the standard of the novel of rural life to a new standard – and, like Forfar, tactfully setting his tales in a period one or two generations before his own time – also gave folk magicians little credit. They generally appear on the side-lines of his plots, abetting superstitious beliefs and fears.<sup>68</sup> The great exception amply proves the rule: the character of Elizabeth Endorfield in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, who claims to work magic and is called a ‘Deep Body’ (i.e. a wise woman), but actually achieves everything by her own knowledge, and wholly benign manipulation, of human psychology.<sup>69</sup>

The same complex of treatments, pioneered by Scott, can be found in the work of lesser – but still significant – writers contemporary to Hardy. Walter Raymond made a ‘wise man’ in one of his stories play the same role as most of those in Hardy’s; of abetting and encouraging the delusion of a farmer convinced of lying under a bewitchment.<sup>70</sup> Charlotte Yonge provided a blisteringly nasty portrait of a cunning woman plying her trade from a cave in Cheddar Gorge, and in the process duping her clients by one lie and subterfuge after another. She is the enemy of both real medicine and Christianity, and of progress in general, and a thief as well as a charlatan, who gets her just desserts when she dies of shock after an attempt to duck her as a witch. The book was published to be given as a school prize to children.<sup>71</sup> Arthur Morrison’s *Cunning Murrell* was a fictional study of a genuine, and celebrated, Essex cunning man of the mid-nineteenth century, whom he portrayed as a master of tricks, dodges and deceptions, yet who genuinely believes in his claimed powers and seeks fame rather than money. The reader is none the less left in no doubt that Murrell’s effect on his neighbourhood is malign, in fostering fear and hatred there by identifying individuals as witches: he comes over as a latter-day witch-hunter, with his own brand of fanaticism. All in all, the book probably provides the most extended and acute psychological portrait of a folk magician in British literature; and still a hostile one.<sup>72</sup> This generation of novels also included, moreover, one which at

last genuinely ran against earlier literary tradition: Sabine Baring-Gould's *Mrs Curgenven of Curgenven*, from 1893.<sup>73</sup> Set in East Cornwall in the mid-nineteenth century, it includes a wise woman living on Bodmin Moor, wife to a herdsman, who provides a full range of magical services to local people. She makes a useful profit from them, but genuinely believes in her vocation. All this is portrayed as natural, and without any censure, and when she puts a formal curse on the villain of the tale, a bullying land agent, it is excused as a traditional weapon of the weak against the strong. At the conclusion of the book, she is teaching her skills to her son-in-law, a former policeman, so that they can be continued.

Baring-Gould's approach did not become the standard one in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Instead, the best-selling novel from them to feature a cunning person was Mary Webb's *Precious Bane*, of 1924, in which the character concerned, Beguildy, is one of the most unpleasant, a vicious and vindictive charlatan who revels in the impostures he inflicts on clients and precipitates the sequence of tragedy which ends the story, by a wanton act of vengeance.<sup>74</sup> Also from these decades came a short story by Rudyard Kipling, in 1910, which embodied the other aspect of the Walter Scott inheritance. His village magician, from Sussex in the period of the Napoleonic Wars, is mostly concerned with healing, and succeeds in it because of a profound understanding of the human body, surpassing that of the local doctor. He uses spells and charms to impress the villagers and induce them to accept his cures without question; though at one point they turn against him as a witch and he has to face them down. What is innovatory about Kipling's attractive 'wizard' is that he is not dispossessed nobility or gentry but a working-class hero, a former smuggler turned carpenter.<sup>75</sup> Finally, a further novel element was added to literary portraits of cunning folk in 1928, by Catherine Dodd, who infused hers with the new sense of witchcraft as a vehicle for female empowerment.<sup>76</sup> She traced the practice of cunning craft through a sequence of generations of admirable women in the same family, starting with one whipped as a witch by the authorities in 1646 (but emerging undeterred). In each the craft (embodied in a book of recipes) relies on a mixture

of actual medicine and psychology embedded in a structure of ceremonial magic mostly consisting of conjurations of Christian angels, and brings agency, independence and a strong personal identity – and in one case, real prosperity – to the women concerned.

It may therefore be recognised that overall literary attitudes to cunning folk did soften over the whole period under review, or at least from the end of the nineteenth century, as the influence of increasing democracy and feminism, and perhaps a greater willingness to credit alternative medical practices with some efficacy, had its effect. However, equally apparent is a remarkable continuity throughout, of hostility to such people as charlatans and criminals who exploited and perpetuated outmoded superstitious beliefs among the humbler classes. This was also accompanied from the beginning to the end by a willingness to extenuate those who pretended to use magic in order to achieve good results which depended in actuality on quick wits and a knowledge of medicine and human nature, especially if the practitioners concerned came originally from more genteel backgrounds than those whom they tended. Even Catherine Dodd's heroines, the best personifications from the period of the feminist view of the wise woman, are highly literate and practise an explicitly Christian form of magic.

## CONCLUSION

It may be proposed that the breadth of time span chosen for this study, and the broad range of works, has revealed some significant patterns. Clearly, literary interest in witches and (to a lesser extent) cunning folk remained strong in Britain between 1800 and 1940, and covered all written media, including novels, poems and short stories. Even when Scott is subtracted from the record, the early decades of the nineteenth century already display a considerable amount of it, and in the later parts of the period such interest is demonstrated by the fact that five of the novels considered above were published in 1927 alone. In contrast to such peaks of production, there are no extended amounts of

time – of a decade or more – in which the subject lost popularity. As would perhaps be expected, changes in attitude to it did appear during the one and a half centuries under discussion. Overall, it can be said that the treatment of both witches and folk magicians grew more benevolent with time, the turning point being in the second half of the span under consideration. First it became less common in the late nineteenth century for evil witches to suffer horrific punishment, by burning at the stake or murder, as a satisfying conclusion to a story. Then, from the end of the century, altering social and cultural expectations began to rehabilitate witchcraft as a force for female empowerment – drawing on the undoubted fact that it was one of very few embodiments of independent female agency which traditional European culture had bequeathed – and also as a solvent force on stifling social convention in general. Over the same period, attitudes to cunning craft also softened, as even working-class practitioners of it, who truly believed in their magic, were no longer automatically condemned. Towards the end of the time span concerned, the traditional image of the wise woman became linked to a feminist agenda, as another representation of strong, independent and effective womanhood.

On the other hand, all this must be placed in a context of considerable overall continuity of attitudes, ideas and motifs. Most strikingly, the evil witch, who must be defeated and punished as part of the story, remained a very potent figure throughout, and across the three genres of novel, short story and poetry was the most frequently used aspect of the subject. At the very end of the span of time concerned, in the late 1920s and 1930s, the very popular work of John Buchan and Dennis Wheatley employed the latest historical thinking and the latest developments in the practice of ritual magic itself, to provide further momentum to it. Both, in the process, provided a justification for the early modern witch hunts and reaffirmed the importance of Christianity as a source of cosmic goodness and power to be deployed against the forces of utter wickedness and depravity which witchcraft represented. At the same time, the rationalist, Enlightenment, view of the witch trials as a crime against humanity, induced by ignorance and superstition, also remained vigorous throughout

the whole time under review, and the concept of the accused witch as innocent victim (and usually a vulnerable woman, either young and unconventional or old and poor) as potent. The main change in it was that towards the end of the period she was more likely to live in the nineteenth-century British countryside than in an early modern European community. Likewise, throughout the period the dominant image of a cunning person remained that of a working-class charlatan, exploiting the gullibility and weakness of his or her neighbours and ultimately representing a force for harm in the community. Such people were usually only extenuated if they were revealed as scientists in disguise, usually from a genteel and educated background, who employed a reputation for magic as the easiest means of winning the respect and co-operation of the benighted commoners to whom they ministered: and this qualification was also a constant across the period concerned. Some continuity was provided even for the later, feminist, interpretation of witchcraft and magic, which had forerunners in the proud figure of Meg Merrilies, and the high-spirited one of Cathy Linton.

It may be suggested, therefore, that most of the pioneering suggestions made about portrayals of witchcraft in British literature between 1800 and 1940 were correct, to an extent. During the whole Victorian period, portrayals of alleged witches, whether as genuine malefactors or as victims of false accusations, served mainly to reinforce established social and gender roles. Indeed, such portrayals continued to do so in the early twentieth century, and throughout both eras also generally served to reinforce established religious attitudes as well. The same is true of representations of cunning folk. On the other hand, images of witchcraft also always had a subversive potential, which became much stronger and more overt in the final part of our period. Furthermore, it is true both that the treatment of witches and folk magicians became overall more benign during the century and a half concerned, and that negative portrayals of them remained powerful and often dominant until the end. What perhaps emerges most strongly from this study is the richness and complexity of usages which writers of fiction found for such figures. They have been as potent in the modern creative imagination as they were in the early modern one.

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<sup>1</sup> The great pioneer here has been Owen Davies, starting with *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), and continuing with an impressive body of subsequent work.

<sup>2</sup> Maureen Moran, "Light no Smithfield Fires", *Journal of Popular Culture* 33.4 (2000): 123-51; Per Faxneld, "Satanic Feminism" (PhD diss. University of Stockholm, 2014), 277-348, 617-56 (this has now been published by Oxford University Press).

<sup>3</sup> Susan Elsley, "Images of the Witch in Nineteenth-Century Culture" (PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 2012); Sarah Bruton, "Bedlam and Broomsticks" (PhD diss., University of Cardiff, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Mody Boatright, "Witchcraft in the Novels of Sir Walter Scott", *Studies in English* 13 (1933): 95-112; Coleman Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964); Simon White, 'Folk Medicine, Cunning-Men and Superstition in Thomas Hardy's *The Withered Arm*', in *Demons of the Body and Mind*, ed. Ruth Bienstock Andlik (Jefferson NC: Macfarland, 2010), 68-80; Coleman Parsons, "Stevenson's Use of Witchcraft in *Thrawn Janet*", *Studies in Philology* 43.3 (1946): 551-71; Kate Macdonald, 'Witchcraft and Non-Conformity in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes* (1926) and John Buchan's *Witch Wood* (1927)", *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23.3 (2012): 215-38. Marion Gibson is working on a major study of images of early modern witchcraft in British fiction between 1914 and the present, but this has not yet been published at the time of writing.

<sup>5</sup> For its genesis, see John Burnett, *Robert Burns and the Hellish Legion* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2009), 99-117.

<sup>6</sup> 'A Ballad, Shewing How an Old Woman Rode Double, and Who Rode Before Her', anthologised in his *Poems*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ambrosio: or The Monk*. The earliest edition I have used is the Bell one, from London in 1800.

<sup>8</sup> From a vast literature on the Gothic as a genre, and its relationship to others, perhaps Margaret L. Carter, *Specter or Delusion? The Supernatural in Gothic Fiction* (Ann Arbor; Michigan University



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Press, 1987); and Emma Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); are most relevant here.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England* (London: 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Chatto and Windus, 1881), 239-41; W. H. Barrett, *More Tales from the Fens* (London: Routledge, 1964), 19-20, 111-18, 146-50; George Douglas, *Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales* (London: Scott, 1893), 177-9, 185; James Bowker, *Goblin Tales of Lancashire* (London: Sonnenschein, 1883), 167; Ruth Tongue, *Somerset Folklore* (London: Folklore Society, 1965), 75-6, 87-8; Frederick Grice, *Folk-Tales of the North Country* (London: Thomas and Nelson, 1945), 72-5. In addition to 'fully-formed' tales like these, there are scores which exult over the death or injury of witches when in animal form.

<sup>10</sup> On witches in fairy tales of this sort, see especially Sheldon Cashdan, *The Witch Must Die* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> *The Amber Witch* in 1846, translated by Lady Duff Gordon, and *Sidonia* in 1848, translated by Lady Wilde.

<sup>12</sup> Quintin Poynt, *The Wizard Priest and the Witch* (London: Newman, 1822).

<sup>13</sup> James Hogg, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. Douglas Mack (Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 223-41; and *A Queer Book*, ed. P. D. Garside (Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 193-6.

<sup>14</sup> I have used the 1870 London edition by Peter Davis: p. 116.

<sup>15</sup> It was published in 1849 after serialisation in the *Sunday Times* in 1848. For its genesis, see Jeffrey Richards, 'The "Lancashire novelist" and the Lancashire witches', in *The Lancashire Witches*, ed. Robert Poole (Manchester University Press, 2002), 166-87.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, 'The Poor Clare', *Round the Sofa* (December, 1855): n.p.

<sup>17</sup> T. W., 'The Witches' Ride', *Once a Week* 9.229 (14 November 1863): 586; Anon., 'The Witches' Sabbath', *St James's Magazine* NS 5 (April 1870): 500-3.

<sup>18</sup> 'Sister Helen' was first published in 1881, and is anthologized in the various editions of Rosetti's work; William Bell Scott's *The Witch's Ballad*, from 1871, is likewise a standard part of his collected poems.

<sup>19</sup> It was first published in 1881, is and anthologized in each edition of Stevenson's works. For the background, see Parsons's article in n. 4.

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<sup>20</sup> First published in 1893: the tale is in chapter 15.

<sup>21</sup> Issues of April 1875, pp. 58-64, and July, pp. 65-8.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., 'The Witch of Garrowbuie', *Belgravia* 33 (August 1877): 205-10.

<sup>23</sup> Published under the name of Ford Huffer, *The Queen Who Flew* (London: Bliss, Sands and Fuster, 1894).

<sup>24</sup> 'The Witches' Wood' was anthologized in Coleridge's *Poems* in 1908; the play, *The Witch*, by one Jenssen, was described in the *English Review* (April 1911): 164.

<sup>25</sup> J. W. Brodie-Innes, *For the Soul of a Witch* (London: Rebman, 1910); and *The Devil's Mistress* (London: Rider, 1916); and see his belief in the continuing reality of witchcraft in his article in the *Occult Review* 25 (1917): 264-7.

<sup>26</sup> Especially *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (Oxford University Press, 1921).

<sup>27</sup> London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927.

<sup>28</sup> See Buchan's similar reversal of a usual trope of witchcraft in his previous novel, *The Dancing Floor* (London: Nelson, 1926), in which a young Englishwoman is attacked by villagers who try to burn her as a witch. They do so, however, in the name of a revived pagan religion, and are brought back to a benign Christianity after she saves herself. In a short story, 'The Outgoing of the Tide', first published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1902, Buchan had portrayed Satan's attempts to draw an honest girl into his service, using one of his veteran witches, in eighteenth-century Scotland. The tale ends with the girl being providentially drowned instead, and her suitor, whom the Devil had tried to use as a dupe, converted to an austere and zealous Christianity: the tale was republished on the Internet by eBooks@Adelaide.

<sup>29</sup> First published by Hutchinson.

<sup>30</sup> See Phil Baker's study of Wheatley's life, sources and influence in *The Devil is a Gentleman* (Sawtry: Daedalus, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> For the most recent study of these points, see Ronald Hutton, *The Witch* (London: Yale University Press, 2017).

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<sup>32</sup> John Masfield, *The Midnight Folk* (London: Macmillan, 1927); Una L. Silberrad, *The Book of Sanchia Stapleton* (London: Hutchinson, 1927); Dorothy Macardle, *Witch's Brew* (London: Deane, 1931).

<sup>33</sup> John Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1646); Friedrich Spee, *Cautio Criminalis* (Rinteln, 1631).

<sup>34</sup> For an overview see Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra et al., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Athlone, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), chapter 15; see also *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), chapter 23; and *Waverley* (1814), chapter 13. All Scott's novels were published at Edinburgh by Constable.

<sup>36</sup> *Ivanhoe* (1817).

<sup>37</sup> In *The Steam Boat* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1822), 140-5.

<sup>38</sup> *The Witch-Finder* (London: Longman, 1824).

<sup>39</sup> *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (London: Murray, 1831); quotation on p. 389.

<sup>40</sup> For books, see John Graham Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Waugh, 1834); Charles Mackay, *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions* (London, 1841, 167-323); W. E. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (London, 1865), 1-150; and W. H. Davenport-Adams, *Witch, Warlock and Magician* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1889). For articles, Anon., 'A Page from a Sad Book', *Household Words* 5.123 (31 July 1853): 474-6; Anon., 'The Witches of England', *Household Words* 16.385 (6 August 1857): 138-41; A. M. Statham, 'A Word upon Fear', *Quiver* 4.174 (January 1869): 220-2; Hypatia Bradlaugh, *Witches and Witchcraft Our Corner* (September, 1884): 160-3; A. M. Judd, 'Witches and Witchcraft', *Belgravia* 81 (May 1893): 24-41.

<sup>41</sup> Anon., 'The Witchfinder', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 56.347 (September 1844): 297-311, and 56.348 (October 1844), 487-506; Anon., 'The Old Witch of Teddington', *Peter Parley's Annual* 5 (1844): 243-50; Anon., 'The Light of Other Days', *Household Words* 12.287 (2 September 1855): 201-5; Pierce Egan, 'The Blue-Eyed Witch', *The London Journal* 48.1242 (24 November 1868): 337-41; Anon., 'The Witch', *Every Week* 40.1023 (20 February 1889): 125-6; Ralph Brotherton, 'The Witchfinder', *The English Illustrated Magazine* 3 (June 1903): 245-56.

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<sup>42</sup> Most conveniently republished in Mrs Gaskell, *Lois the Witch and Other Stories* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1989).

<sup>43</sup> Mrs E. Lynn Linton, *Witch Stories* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861): quotation on p. 428.

<sup>44</sup> 'A Witch Burning', from 1901, reprinted in *A Circle of Witches*, ed. Peter Haining (New York: Taplinger, 1971), 175-87.

<sup>45</sup> Published under the name of Ford Madox Hueffer, as *The Half Moon* (New York: Doubleday, 1909).

<sup>46</sup> In Book 5, chapter 7 of the novel, which was first published in instalments in *Belgravia*, through the year 1878.

<sup>47</sup> Published in *Wessex Tales* (London: Macmillan, 1888).

<sup>48</sup> Walter Raymond, *Gentleman Upcott's Daughter* (London: Unwin, 1893); *Love and Quiet Life* (London: Hodder Stoughton, 1894; and *No Soul Above Money* (London: Longman, 1899); Edward S. Tylee, *The Witch Ladder* (London: Duckworth, 1911); Allen Raine, *A Welsh Witch* (London: Hutchinson, 1902); Mary Webb, *Precious Bane* (London: Cape, 1924). Mary Webb represents a Shropshire at the opening of the nineteenth century in which country people believe that witches dance naked on hilltops at night before Satan. For a parallel vision to these writers in a different sort of novel, see R. C. Ashby, *Beauty Bewitched* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), in which a beautiful and rather strange young woman, descended from a reputed witch, is automatically believed by local (Yorkshire moorland) people to be one herself: she is actually a kleptomaniac.

<sup>49</sup> For examples, see Barrett, *More Tales from the Fens*, 111-29; and Marjorie Rowling, *The Folklore of the Lake District* (London: Batsford, 1976), 26-7.

<sup>50</sup> Wordsworth's 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' was written in 1798, and is repeatedly anthologized with his other work.

<sup>51</sup> For example in Arthur Wadham, 'Lancashire Witches', *The Monthly Magazine* 2.12 (December 1839): 635-46. This approach was presaged in a ballad, 'The Lancashire Witches', published in *The Scots Magazine* 31 (September 1769): 488.

<sup>52</sup> *The Lancashire Witches* (London: Forsyth Brothers, 1879).

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<sup>53</sup> Lily Shorthouse, 'The Man with a Stone Heart', *Sharpe's London Magazine* 33 (July 1868): 211-16.

<sup>54</sup> First published in London in 1847, by Newby.

<sup>55</sup> George Egerton, *Her Keynotes* (London: Lane, 1895), 1-30: quotations from pp. 22-3.

<sup>56</sup> First published in London by Chatto and Windus. The growing body of literary criticism of the work is thus far irrelevant to the concerns of this article.

<sup>57</sup> Published in London by Macmillan: quotation from chapter 6.

<sup>58</sup> *The Passionate Clowns* (London: Duckworth, 1927).

<sup>59</sup> Published in London by Constable.

<sup>60</sup> For general studies of cunning folk in this later period, see Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*; and *Cunning-Folk* (London: London and Hambledon, 2003) (which also covers the early modern age); and Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 84-111.

<sup>61</sup> *The Bride of Lammermoor* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1819), chapters 23 and 31.

<sup>62</sup> *The Pirate* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1822), *passim*.

<sup>63</sup> Published at Edinburgh by Constable in 1816.

<sup>64</sup> *Guy Mannering* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1815), *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> Published 1808: I have used the 1840 London edition by Cunningham.

<sup>66</sup> Anon., 'The Witch', *Metropolitan Magazine* 14.53 (September 1835): 80-6.

<sup>67</sup> *The Wizard of West Penwith* (Penzance: West Cornish, 1871)

<sup>68</sup> See 'The Withered Arm'; *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (London: Osgood, 1886), chapters 26-7; *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (London: Osgood, 1891), chapter 21; and 'The Catching Ballad of the Wedding Clothes', published in *Winter Words* (London: Macmillan, 1928).

<sup>69</sup> Published in London, 1872, by Tinsley.

<sup>70</sup> *No Soul Above Money*, 129-30.

<sup>71</sup> Charlotte M. Yonge, *The Cunning Woman's Grandson* (London: National Society's Repository, 1889).

<sup>72</sup> Published in London by Methuen, 1900.

<sup>73</sup> Also published in London by Methuen.

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<sup>74</sup> Reference in n, 47.

<sup>75</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Rewards and Fairies* (London: Macmillan, 1910), chapter 4.

<sup>76</sup> *Three Silences* (London: Jarrolds, 1927).